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WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM,
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA
AND RELATED INTOLERANCE

Durban, 31 August - 7 September 2001
Item 9 of the provisional agenda

CONFERENCE THEMES

NGO Contributions

Contribution submitted by the Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru"

The secretariat has received the following written statement, which is transmitted to the World Conference.

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I. CAUSES AND ORIGIN OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

(in relation to items 9 and 10)

1. The brutal scourges of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance that are today besetting the vulnerable sectors of society, in particular the indigenous peoples, national minorities and minorities of African descent, are social phenomena as old as man.

2. Racial prejudice and superiority complexes in their various forms and manifestations have been omnipresent throughout the evolution of mankind. Whether racial conduct has been prompted by the socio-economic conditions of each society or is rooted in the very nature of man, racism is by no means an inevitable fact of history to which mankind can only resign itself.

3. Without any doubt, racism, not as a preconceived idea but as a virus in the human body, needs to be eradicated. Racism has its causes, its effects and its victims. The origin of the phenomenon of racism goes back to prehistoric times, in other words, to the dawn of primitive society during the period known as the "fire war", when men would attack each other with rudimentary weapons for a piece of land, for food to survive, for a hut and even for a lover.

4. However, the evolution of primitive society reached a crucial point when man left the animal world to become a thinking and reasoning being. Unlike animals, men endowed with intuition and genius succeeded in discovering fire, and invented the first rudimentary tools for extracting the means of subsistence which mother earth has offered us for millions of years.

5. In those remote times, men already knew how to cultivate the land with respect and to care for every tree which gave shade to their tombs, they hunted animals in accordance with their material and spiritual needs, they shared the fruits of common labour in order to ensure collective prosperity, and they lived in harmony with nature, without discrimination or exclusion.

6. Far from being an accident of history or an inevitability of fate, the transition from one form of social organization to another is determined by the contradictions peculiar to each economic-social structure. In one historically determined phase of social development subject to its objective laws, private ownership emerged and, with it, class warfare.

7. After the extinction of primitive society based on collective ownership, subsequent societies have always been divided into classes and never into races. The division of society into major groups of men who are differentiated among themselves by the place they occupy in the economic and social system and by their relations with the means of production and distribution of wealth was the historic factor in racism and the basis for the transnational movement of capital which led mankind to globalization.

8. The emergence of the market economy and class interests profoundly changed relations between human beings with respect to the principles of equity, justice and solidarity, to the extent that men could no longer control their basic instincts and yearnings to own property.

9. Nevertheless, property and social classes comprise a historical character. This means that any socio-economic system based on the exploitation of man by man, racial discrimination by man against man and the neo-colonial oppression of one class by another is historically doomed to perish through the operation of its own internal contradictions in the same way as it arrived in the world.

II. THE WAR OF CONQUEST AND COLONIZATION

10. In his analysis of the structure of the capitalist system, Karl Marx described the discovery of gold and silver in America and the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population as events which marked the rosy dawn of the capitalist era and the momenta of primitive accumulation (see Das Kapital, vol. 1, chap. XXXI).

11. This method of analysis, which is valid for all eras, helps us to gain a better understanding of the bases, causes and economic factors which, in the final instance, shaped colonialism. This arrived in the world gushing blood through every pore and predestined to engender not only the scourges of racism, racial hatred and violence, but all the contradictions of the market economy, leading mankind along the path of the wars of conquest for the division of the world between the colonial metropoles and the establishment of an unjust, unequal and anarchic economic order.

12. In the steps of the colonial aggression against ancestral civilizations, one day in 1492 the Spanish and Portuguese conquistadors, greedy for wealth and power, rough, tough and driven by a ferocious appetite for gold and silver, landed on the pristine territory of the Americas, and set up the colonial system, with its inhuman institutions of slavery, servitude and inquisition.

13. Through its magnitude, supremely cruel methods and most bestial forms of violence, the slaughter inflicted by European colonialism was the greatest holocaust ever witnessed by man. At the World Conference against Racism, where the causes and sources of racism are to be considered, no one has a right to evade or conceal the blackest pages written in blood and tears without equal in the annals of the history of the Western hemisphere.

14. Intent on its war of conquest, the medieval despotism of Spanish, and later French and British, colonization excluded from the human race the native Indian, the indigenous Andean inhabitant of South America, looting his land and natural resources, depriving him of his human dignity and placing him on a par with animals, without soul or reason.

15. The World Conference against Racism may or may not be the appropriate occasion to re-establish the historical truth about the colonial barbarism involved in the genocide, slavery, servitude and crimes perpetrated against the indigenous minority civilizations and the trade in African slaves.

16. Over 500 years later, the European conquest and colonization have demonstrated that racism constitutes a Western phenomenon, whose Eurocentricity is based on the idea of the "purity of blood" of the colonizers. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the theory or myth of "purity of blood" was already growing in Spain, with its attempt to establish the equation: "race equals civilization".

17. At the basis of the Iberian invention, the institution known as the "statutes for cleansing of the blood", lies biological determinism of a hereditary type. On the strength of this scientifically false theory, race was determined by the correlation between genetic patrimony, on the one hand, and intellectual abilities and moral values, on the other. Using this so-called reasoning, the alleged "superior race" arrogated to itself the right to subjugate, exploit and, on occasion, completely or partly destroy the conquered members of the ancestral civilizations.

18. Throughout history, racism is born, grows and feeds on the economic factors and strategic interests of the dominant classes and gives rise to social movement, to nationalist trends of a colonialist character, wars of aggression, and ethnic and religious conflicts, ending in racial cleansing. This reflects the irrational nature of man, whose ferocious appetite for wealth and the power to dominate have no limits, either in time or in space.

19. It has been said a thousand times that racism has no scientific basis and that "race or diversity of human races" does not exist. In times long past, it was believed that mankind was divided into races. According to this ethnocentric concept, the black people of Africa, the aborigines of Australia and the Indians in the Americas, belonged to the inferior race.

20. In the name of scientific truth, and in the name of peace, human dignity and the right to difference, we Indians are combating false ideas, erroneous prejudices, faulty reasoning and pseudo-scientific theories. We unequivocally condemn racial segregation wherever it may be, and also latent apartheid, marginalization and absolute poverty in the context of the market economy.

III. COMPENSATION FOR THE VICTIMS OF RACISM

(under item 12)

21. The colonial Powers, especially the Spanish Crown, which built a degrading colonial system that marked the end of life as such and the beginning of mere survival for the vanquished and colonized peoples, owe an immeasurable debt to the indigenous peoples and nations, peoples of African descent and minorities around the world.

22. In the spirit of the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, which called on States to ensure the full and free participation of indigenous peoples in all aspects of society, especially in regional and international forums directly or indirectly concerned with their rights and freedoms, the effective participation of their representatives and grass-roots organizations in the World Conference against Racism should be considered an act of social justice in the highest sense of State responsibility.

23. The victims of colonialism and racism are turning their gaze to Durban. In response to the challenge of human conscience, the international community and the Western Powers have a political responsibility to explicitly and unequivocally recognize the perverse effects of European colonialism and the crimes against humanity perpetrated against the lives of aboriginal peoples. They should beg forgiveness of the victims of slavery, servitude, racism and racial discrimination.

24. The World Conference against Racism would be dashing the hopes of the victims of the scourge of racism, the natural offspring of colonialism, if the Western Powers of the North and the Creole elites of the South did not assume their responsibility for re-establishing historical truth and making good the material and spiritual damage caused by colonial oppression.

25. At a time when the colonial Powers are endeavouring to deny that colonialism is the main cause of racism, so as to evade their moral and political responsibility, there are no words to describe the indescribable nor any terms to denote the human tragedy that left us desolation, lamentation and tears, a tragedy which included:

(a) The dislocation by violence of the structures and forms of social organization, which provided the foundations of aboriginal civilizations based on the collective ownership of property;

(b) Historic communities destroyed and wiped off the face of the earth, and their millennial cultures and wisdom annihilated, whose descendants are now stricken with grief for having lost the memory of their ancestors;

(c) The mass extermination of 90 million Indians, out of the 170 million who used to live between Alaska and Tierra del Fuego, the death of their martyrs in the most atrocious conditions and the systematic denial for the survivors of the recognition of their indigenous identity, as peoples and subjects in law;

(d) The genocide perpetrated in its cruellest forms, with the intention of totally or partially destroying the aboriginal communities and subjecting the vanquished to conditions of lifelong servitude and forced labour;

(e) The most inhuman regime of slavery, which reduced the condition of the Indian to that of slave and serf, forced labourer (mitayo) and servant, subjected to the imposition of rights of ownership and of sale or exchange of slaves and mitayos, and the African slave trade by land and sea;

(f) The plunder of their territories and ancestral lands, stripped of their wealth and vital resources which, for the colonizers, represented a commercial and monetary asset, so that, defeated by the might of the strongest, the aboriginal peoples found themselves attacked, persecuted and imprisoned in the name of the colonial order and condemned to extreme poverty;

(g) The indescribable robbery, looting and transfer of incalculably vast quantities of gold and silver, extracted from American Indian territories, and considered to be a natural booty of colonial warfare for dispatch to the Spanish Crown;

(h) The huge abundance of wealth extracted from the lungs of the Americas represents an inestimable contribution to the primitive accumulation of capital in the Old World, which until then had generated only indigent cultures and economies;

(i) The palaces, temples and castles, admired the world over, built in the cities of the colonial Powers with the sweat and lamentation, blood and tears of mitayo Indians, whose corpses now lie in the deep shafts of the gold and silver mines;

(j) The best of their cultural and artistic heritage was plundered. The cultural and artistic assets, as well as spiritual objects, symbolic manuscripts and even human remains of our ancestors, were robbed by the global bio-pirates and are now transiting in their death throes in airports and customs sheds, mere objects of speculation on the international antiques market.

26. Who bears the historic responsibility for this human tragedy, unparalleled in the history of colonized nations?

There is absolutely no doubt that the colonial Powers and metropoles have the moral duty to accept their historic and political responsibility, to conscientiously scrutinize their expansionist, colonial and ethnocentric policies, and to beg the forgiveness of millions of victims of colonialism, racism and racial discrimination.

27. Bearing in mind the imprescriptibility of crimes against humanity and observing that in none of the solemn declarations, instruments and international conventions for the judgement and punishment of such crimes is any time limitation provided, the Western Powers now more than ever bear the political responsibility of recognizing and accepting reparation and restitution, compensation and rehabilitation, as stipulated in international law.

28. If there were no reparation or compensation for the victims of racism - the natural product of colonialism - the World Conference against Racism would be deprived of its political essence and its legal scope. In open defiance of the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in which it is asserted that no one shall be held in slavery or servitude, the contemporary forms of slavery, the slave trade, forced labour and practices similar to servitude and racial discrimination have not yet been eliminated in all parts of the world.

29. In the light of the above, the World Conference against Racism should strongly urge the international community, especially the colonial Powers, to recognize the right of the indigenous peoples, minorities, peoples of African descent and victims of colonialism and racism to just reparation and compensation for the immeasurable material and spiritual damage caused by the wars of aggression and colonization in the Americas, Africa and Asia over the centuries.

IV. STRATEGIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM

(under item 13)

30. On the basis of the General Assembly resolutions calling on human rights bodies and mechanisms to undertake studies and investigations on relations of cause and effect with regard to racism, with a view to condemning any doctrine of superiority based on racial segregation as scientifically false, morally reprehensible, and socially unjust and dangerous for peace, the forthcoming World Conference against Racism in Durban should adopt effective, coherent strategies in the fight to eliminate racism in the following areas. It should:

(a) Continue investigating the causes, sources and premises which have for centuries been generating the universal scourge of discrimination between human beings on grounds of race, colour, social origin and national identity, within the very heart of economic phenomena, civilizations and cultures. In other words, it is essential to seek the answer not in the spirit, but in the actual structures of historically determined societies;

(b) Analyse the multiple facets of racism in economic, social and political factors, that is, identify the roots of the scourge of racism, following step by step the traces and consequences of the slavery, servitude and oppression of man by man resulting from the prevailing colonial and neo-colonial systems;

(c) Examine the extent of contemporary forms of racism and modern slavery, as well as the exclusion and marginalization of the most vulnerable sectors in the context of the globalization of capital and markets, the deregulation of the international financial system, and the concentration of wealth and natural resources in the hands of transnational corporations;

(d) Analyse the racial factor in the movement of the new international economic order, in which blind market forces are leading the societies of the North and South on the path of violence, incitement to racial hatred and wars of aggression, condemning historic communities, indigenous peoples and national minorities to genocide, extreme poverty and the mutilation of mother earth;

(e) Indict the powerful economic factors and strategic interests which constitute the greatest obstacle to the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and the implementation of the objectives of the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination;

(f) Regulate the application of new, sophisticated technologies in the field of education which tend to encourage incitement to racial hatred and the spread of the culture of violence, and electronic games and computer networks which inculcate in our children an aggressive instinct, to the detriment of respect for human dignity.

31. The World Conference against Racism should also pay priority attention to the improper and illegal use of the Internet to disseminate racist propaganda and neo-fascist ideologies, giving rise to the urgent need to adopt a moral code of behaviour for Internet users and service-providers.

32. The World Conference against Racism should consider education as a tool for gaining awareness of freedom, for the full development of the human personality, and for strengthening respect, understanding and friendship among all nations, on which the maintenance of peace and collective security in the world depends.

33. In conclusion, the task of freeing humankind from the universal scourge of racism requires the political will of States, especially the Western Powers, to transform the present international economic order, which is profoundly racist and unjust, absolutely unsustainable and morally reprehensible.

Written declaration submitted by the Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru".
31 May 2001

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